

DHS Matters!

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DHS offices recycle and support schools simultaneously

Department of Human Services local offices have found a way to support K-12 education, recycle empty print cartridges, and contribute funds to their local accounts all at the same time.

Through a partnership with Michigan Association of School Boards and America's School Recycling Program, local DHS offices can recycle empty printer cartridges at no cost (and with just about no work) and earn funds for their local accounts.

Today's big story

"About 20 (local offices) have signed up so far," said John Evans of DHS Bureau of Juvenile Justice, who wrote an L-letter on the program (L-05-026 dated March 3, 2005). The objective is for local offices to sign up for the program, then fill up boxes they get from a sponsor with old printer cartridges (the program takes cell phones, too) and return them in the postage paid box.

"Each participating local office will receive 50 percent of the value of each box they fill directly," the letter said. "The other 50 percent goes to help Michigan's schools."

According to material attached to the letter, an average 50-person office will fill an entire box in about three months. Each box can be worth up to \$200 depending on the types of cartridges (and cell phones, if any) inside. Doing this four times a year could net an office \$800 for its social service account.

"Local offices could use this money, as they do collections from casual days or donations from the community, to support client and staff activities," said Jim Nye, DHS deputy director for field operations.

"Outstate counties can receipt the money to their Social Welfare Account and manage as county dollars. Wayne County has no Social Welfare Fund but the Social Services Board has the ability to receive funds. Wayne County also has a special line item for donations."

■ For information on the program go to DHS-Net, "DHS Letter Series", "L-letters" and see L-05-026.

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Taking the polar plunge

Taking the Polar Plunge was a popular fundraising event this winter. DHS Lansing employees **Gary Goddard** and **Denise Stork** participated in Lansing's first Law Enforcement Torch Run Polar Plunge this winter and helped raise \$11,000 for Special Olympics.

On Feb. 12, **Al Myatt**, an Adult Protective Services investigator for Saginaw County DHS, took the Polar Plunge in Saginaw County's Haithco Lake. The Polar Plunge was sponsored by the Law Enforcement Torch Run. Al and the 69 other plungers collected over \$15,000 in donations. Al's Saginaw County coworkers donated \$300 from a weekly Casual Day. The proceeds go to a local charity, or to put on meals for the office staff. With Money sent into Special Olympics by friends, Al's final donation to the organization was \$365.



Al Myatt of Saginaw County DHS taking the plunge (center) and showing off in his outfit (inset photo) during the Polar Plunge Feb. 12.



Kent County part of local Resource Bonanza

From Mary A. Schoen

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Kent County DHS partnered with the Child and Family Resource Council and ACCESS – All County Churches Emergency Support System – to provide a “one-stop-shopping” arena of the human services available in the community. More than 90 area agencies participated in the “Resource Bonanza” staffing booths to explain the services they offer.



Sandra Myers, John Stafford and Amy Squiers from Kent County DHS at the resource bonanza.



Michelle Seigo

Many handouts were available for participants to take back to their workplace. The Resource Fair was held March 8 from 10 AM–2 PM and was very well attended. It was not only a chance for the community to learn the human services available in our area but for the various agencies to learn about each other. **Michelle Seigo**, volunteer coordinator for Kent County, was one of the main organizers of the event. Congratulations, Michelle, on a job well done!

Diversity & volunteerism lead Bay-Arenac events

From Nancy Mueller

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Bay County celebrated Black History Month in February with displays done by eligibility specialists **Deborah Lloyd** and **Karlisa Robinson**, featuring a display of famous African-Americans who made history through the arts, cinema, government and civil rights. Staff recieved a 10-question quiz to test their knowledge on African-American history. **Joan Tacey** was the top winner and was given a gasoline card. Runners-up were given McDonald's coupons.

Our Bay Social Committee has been busy with fundraisers. Staff pay \$2 on non-payday Fridays to dress casual. Half the amount collected goes toward client assistance and the other half is used for staff luncheons, holiday parties and more. Our Walk for Warmth casual day held Feb. 24 resulted in \$65 collected and the Social Committee doubled that amount with their donation. Staff also filled five 18-gallon plastic tubs filled with personal items and donated to the Good Samaritan Mission. Casual Day for Tsunami relief collected \$83 in February and was given to our local Red Cross chapter.

As our office Affirmative Action-Diversity delegate, I put together a “Celebrate Women’s History” month display called “I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar!” with portrayals of famous women and newspaper articles of extraordinary women in our area. As a part of that celebration, Anneke Burke-Kooistra addresses Bay-Arenac staff regarding her life in the early 1940s as a two-year-old living in the Netherlands. There, her parents hid eight Jews in their home from 1942-45 without her two sisters or her knowing about it. She now lives in Tuscola County and speaks to many school groups, civic groups, churches and synagogues on World War II and the Holocaust.

Wayne County Oakman District annual provider luncheon

From Stephanie Royall

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The Wayne County Oakman Adult Services District hosted its fourth annual Provider Appreciation Luncheon last Oct. 27 at the Detroit Public Schools Breithaupt Career and Technical Center. Fifty-three providers were honored at this year's luncheon for the special care they provide to our clients in the Independent Living Services and Adult Community Placement programs. Special guest at the luncheon included [Patrice Eller](#), deputy director of DHS Office of Adult Services, and [Cynthia Travis](#), Wayne County Zone X manager.

Each provider received an Outstanding Service Award from Gov. Jennifer Granholm, a certificate of appreciation from the Oakman Adult Services District, an individual photo and gift. A special thanks to all Oakman staff, since without their direct participation this event would not be possible. The event was generously supported by funds from Independent Living Services, Adult Community Placement and clerical support staff.



Oakman District luncheon committee members and guests (back row l-r) [Carolyn Brown](#), [La Dawn Jackson](#), [Karen Madison](#), [Leslie Turner](#), [Marie Mosley](#), [Elizabeth Hobson](#), [Wanda Bradley](#) and [Stephanie Royall](#). Front row seated (l-r) [Patrice Eller](#), director DHS Office of Adult Services, [Margaret Bryant](#), luncheon committee chairperson, [Paulette Wilson](#), [Gladys Wynn](#), [Barbara Nelson](#), Oakman District manager, and [Cynthia Travis](#), Zone X manager.

Ingham County's "Fappy" awards

From Joe P. Kulpa, Family Independence Manager

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Ingham County staff celebrated Food Assistance Program accuracy by holding "FAP Fiesta 2005" Feb. 16. The event celebrated reduction in the county's mispayment rate from 14.92 percent in FY 2003 to 4.77 percent in FY 2004. There were 46 staff receiving certificates and a gold star key chain for achieving the local office goal of 94 percent accuracy. Another 28 staff were presented with certificates and a blue No. 1 key chain for achieving a perfect 100 percent accuracy rate.

Since the Academy Awards were in February we concluded the ceremony giving certificates and a miniature replica Oscar statue -- or "Fappy" -- to each staff member who had a correct 2004 federal audit that resulted in the dramatically reduced mispayment rate. [Barb Payton](#) and [Tracey Wade](#) had two correct audits in FY 2004 and [Pat McArthur](#) earned the most awards by having three correct audits in FY 2004.



Ingham County "Fappy" winners (back to front l-r): [Audrey Savage](#), [Annette Musky](#), [Jessica Schafer](#), [Leon Coleman](#), [Stacia Cramer](#), [LaChelle Buckner](#), [Becky Penfield](#), [Doris Lott](#), [Pat McArthur](#), [Mireya Allen](#), [Candace Baker](#), [Francis Wilson](#), [Pam Taliaferro](#), [Betty Seckinger](#), [Barb Payton](#), [Tracey Wade](#), [Jeanne Lugo](#).

A view from the top

From Christine Doolittle

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That's what I saw spending time with DHS director Marianne Udow. An impulse led me to sign the bid at the Caring About Kids auction to job shadow her for a day. I won the opportunity to get a glimpse at a day in the life of the department's top banana. I was a little -- okay, more than a little -- nervous, wondering what we'd discuss (everything), if I'd feel comfortable (totally), and would she quiz me on our mission and vision (no, but I memorized them just in case!).

Upon meeting Marianne, my uncertainty dissolved with her personable nature. I was treated as a participant in the day's activities, not just an observer. During the day's events, Marianne exhibited a composed and relaxed style, with a steely core. She was friendly and open during meetings, yet unwavering when necessary.

Our director presents as a quiet yet strong leader and a true advocate for clients and staff alike. Marianne voices appreciation for the challenges faced by staff and respect for the work we do. I admire her knowledge of the varied policies and programs within a complex department that she's headed for just a short time. I left her at the end of the day with an enormous appreciation for the complexity of her job, admiration for the gracious way she performs it, and a taste for the Middle Eastern food she introduced me to at lunch!

If the opportunity presents itself at this year's auction, bid on the chance to spend some time with her. Do yourself a favor and take a peek at DHS from where she stands. It's an eye-opening experience.

■ Caring About Kids is an Ingham County charity that supports Ingham County foster children. The author won her opportunity being the highest bidder at a Caring About Kids-sponsored silent auction held in Lansing.

Equal Opportunity & Diversity Advisory Committee seeks volunteers

By Jeff Meaton

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The Equal Opportunity and Diversity Advisory Committee was created by the director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, who appoints members to represent local, district, and zone offices, residential facilities, central office and other special program areas within the department. Individuals may volunteer to become members of the committee or may be nominated by office or administration directors.



Equal Opportunity and Diversity Advisory Committee members (back row l-r): [James Newson](#), Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs Office director, [Hirut Mersha-Scarlett](#), [Gregory Frens](#), [Roberto Valdez](#), [Paul Cloutier](#) (committee chairperson), [Carl Martin](#), [Sherita Walker](#), [Theresa Root](#) and [Margaret Beall](#), a volunteer. Middle row (l-r): [Joyce Barlow](#), [Mary Hall Thiam](#) (office staff member), [Gina Nelson](#), [Sandra Bow](#). Front row (l-r): [Clyde Edwards](#), [Janice Berry](#), [Jeff Meaton](#) and [Donna Mullins](#). Committee members not pictured: [Sharon Jones](#), [Martha Gonzales-Cortes](#), [Brenda Edwards](#), [Crystal Perry](#), [Shannon Stotenbur](#) and [Sahar Thornton](#).

DHS staff “crunch” numbers at tax time

From Jennifer Storey, Community Resource Coordinator

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Most folks cringe at the mention of filing taxes or even the date of April 15, the filing deadline. Residents in Chippewa County have been quite fortunate that volunteers have given of their time to wade through the forms, deductions, schedules, and more to provide a free tax preparation service.



Dawn Mastaw and Tracy Porcaro

Chippewa County DHS has sponsored a Tax Preparation Program assisting DHS customers and low-income wage earners in filing their state and federal tax returns, Home Heating Credit, and Earned Income Tax Credit for well over 15 years. Two years ago the program's long time volunteer moved from the area, leaving the project without a tax preparer. Upon hearing this news, two staff from the fiscal unit decided to pitch in. [Dawn Mastaw](#) and [Tracy Porcaro](#) volunteered their time and expertise after hours to complete returns for 25 customers in 2004 and over 50 to date in 2005. Each year Dawn and Tracy have improved the program by redesigning the procedures for processing returns, establishing relationships with local tax preparers to share information, and referring customers to additional community resources.

Next year Chippewa County DHS hopes to incorporate training from the IRS to expand this program further into our community by becoming a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) site. Thanks to Dawn and Tracy, Chippewa DHS is actively working to bring additional financial resources to our most needy citizens. Their participation has been an excellent example of using your given talents to help someone in need. Hopefully Dawn and Tracy's service will inspire other employees to “give at the office.”

The committee advises the director on development of goals and objectives for carrying out equal opportunity policies. It reviews and monitors the department's progress toward the attainment of equal opportunity and diversity goals and identifies barriers to equal opportunity within the department.

The committee actively advocates for improvement when barriers to equal opportunity and/or diversity are identified. It also has projects assigned to it by the DHS director.

DHS Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs staff members attend committee meetings to provide technical support, information, advice, and suggest areas of inquiry or specific concerns to be addressed by the committee. The committee meets on the second Friday of each month usually at the Grand Tower Building in Lansing.

The committee is seeking volunteers who are interested in making a difference. If you are such an individual, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs by telephone at (517) 373-8520 or obtain an application online at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/FIA-EODAC-MemberApp_9269_7.pdf

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
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